

25th October 2011

A cross-CRP synthesis of the ISPC's observations on Management and Governance arrangements of CRP proposals

Summary

In its 5th meeting the Fund Council suggested that the ISPC, having reviewed all the submitted CRP proposals, was in a good position to review the CRP management and governance arrangements and to present a synthesis of the cross-CRP management constructs for the consideration of the Fund Council. Three of the common criteria used in the ISPC's review of CRP proposals are partnership management (#4), appropriateness and efficiency of management (#5) and accountability and efficiency of governance (#6). This synthesis builds on the ISPC's qualitative assessment of these criteria. This meta-level synthesis highlights common features, shortcomings and potential risk areas perceived in the governance and management arrangements described in the proposed CRPs with regard to the CRPs' quality of science, role and strategic engagement of partners and, in general, ability to deliver on CRP objectives.

The concept for CRPs was to align research with a clear focus on four System-level development outcomes (SLOs) and for enhancing the likelihood of impact through partnerships. They were also deemed necessary to augment disciplinary or sectoral approaches and to be instruments of change for the CGIAR in seeking synergies and efficiencies in operation. Against the general guidance for management and governance structures given in the Strategy and Results Framework, the CRPs proposed a range of mechanisms, some of which the ISPC deems functional and others with risks, particularly regarding the ability of the CRPs to move away from the *status quo* and become genuine instruments of change.

Overall, the ISPC is of the opinion that the biggest challenge to assuring that the long term leadership and management of CRPs is as effective as possible is to institute greater independence in key decision making and oversight functions; a more nuanced and transparent approach to estimating and supporting effective management; and the capacity to link the long term goals for the CRPs to a management structure that anticipates strong partnerships and new ways of working.

Purpose

At the time of writing, the first full cycle of CRP proposals has been submitted to the Fund Council, making it possible to look across the CRPs to compare the proposed management structures. Fifteen different programs can be expected to generate differing strategies for achieving effective management and oversight. Nevertheless, within those strategies it

should be possible to see common goals for the programs' management and oversight, if not identical mechanisms for achieving them.

The CGIAR created CRPs as the instruments for aligning research and extending impact through partnerships. This review is an opportunity to consider how the larger intent of the CRPs is supported by the ways in which the programs will be managed. Although the transition to a new funding structure will take time, it would be valuable if, from the start, management and oversight facilitated the transition to new ways of collaborating and achieving results, and introduced operating principles and practices that support effective management and oversight of these complex entities.

Among the issues considered in the review is the extent to which the proposed structures:

- Enable the CRP to establish a coherent identity as a program as it aligns research activities and mobilizes resources
- Lead to new partnerships and new models of partnerships
- Shift the center of gravity away from the institutional interests of the Centers and more towards the impact-oriented cultures of the CRPs
- Balance the role and influence of the Centers within a more robust partnership structure
- Increase confidence in priority setting and resource allocation among partners and donors
- Streamline operations
- Assure accountability for results

The measures and indicators used in the review to test whether a program's proposed management structure would contribute to, or inhibit, achieving these results are drawn from the experience of the CGIAR system and the Centers over the last decade in building more effective governing and advisory bodies, and in working collaboratively with each other and with partners.

Table 1 summarizes the proposed structures for each of the CRPs and includes brief notes on relevant characteristics. Tables 2 and 3 summarize the extent to which a CRP has an oversight or management structure that has the potential to strengthen the long-term performance of the CRP. The information in the tables is drawn from the draft proposals presented to the Fund Council and from the ISPC's initial commentaries. In the case of three proposals, the changes made to their management arrangements in response to earlier ISPC and FC reviews have been incorporated:- CRP3.3 (GRiSP) refined the balance of Center and outside perspectives on its Oversight Committee and also provided a clearer description of the continuing role of IRRI in the CRP's management; CRP7 (Climate change, agriculture and food security) focused the relationship between the Independent Scientific Panel and CIAT to emphasize its links to CIAT's board; CRP5 (Water, land and ecosystems) modified the program's steering committee to include independent expert advice. With those exceptions, the proposals used in the review are "original" in the sense that they reflect limited outside review and, consequently, provide a good window into the variety of prevailing theories about workable structures that emerged at a crucial stage in the proposals' drafting.

Guidance to CRP proponents provided in the SRF

Two prevailing concepts appear in the CRPs that broadly influenced program management and oversight. The first is the clear articulation of the legal responsibilities and role of the lead Center. The second is the value placed on a management structure that is “light”—by making use of existing managerial capacity, minimizing bureaucracy, and holding the percentage of funding allocated to support new management costs to a minimum. This emphasis on lean management is difficult to argue with on its surface, but it encouraged management units that were too small to be effective and programs that were more expensive to manage than they appeared.

The current guidance appears in the **Strategy and Results Framework**, submitted by the Consortium Board to the Fund Council in February 2011. It recommends the following components for the governance and management of CRPs (p76):

- A lead Center with fiduciary and operational responsibilities for implementation,
- A Director of the CRP, responsible for the quality and relevance of the program’s outputs,
- A planning and management committee comprising representatives of the lead Center, each of the participating Centers, and other partners with substantial responsibilities in implementing the CRP, and
- A scientific advisory committee, which reports to the planning and management committee, to ensure that the work in the CRP is of the highest quality.

Within the recommended framework, the CRPs reflected a wide variety of arrangements. All preserved the role and legal standing of the lead Center and its board, and maintained a direct reporting relationship with the Consortium Board for accountability purposes. Only a few established a structure within the CRP that provided oversight of the program that was independent of the Centers’ own management or that had either formal or informal access to the lead Center’s board.

Although the guidance from the Consortium Board provides for a management committee and a scientific advisory body, the composition of the former emphasizes the primary role of the Centers in a CRP’s management, and the reporting relationship of the latter is viewed primarily as an input to management. If Centers adopt a narrow interpretation, the recommendations have the potential to create a closed loop for oversight and accountability purposes. While the guidance on the matter of governance and management invites outside and independent perspective into CRPs, it also provides a rationale for limiting this perspective to the management rather than the governance level of the Centers.

Not every CRP chose to adopt this model or interpret it so narrowly. A number of CRPs (CRP3.3, GRiSP; CRP3.4, Roots, tubers and bananas; CRP 3.7, Milk, meat and fish) proposed scientific advisory bodies with members that overlapped with the lead Center’s board, specified an annual report to the board, or stipulated that one of its meetings coincide with that of the board. A few loaded the dice in the favor of outside and potentially new perspectives rather than protect the “ownership” of the Centers. The majority of the CRPs stuck to the recommended structure, with the weakest resulting in a structure where the scientific advisors are a “pool” to be deployed one or two at a time to advise program management (CRP3.5, Gain legumes; CRP3.6, Dryland cereals). In reality, these scientific advisory bodies have no real governance “teeth”.

Observations

The following observations are grouped to reflect the central structural elements that appear consistently in the proposals. They also refer to the issues identified at the beginning of the review that link structure to the qualities and characteristics that support the programs' effectiveness.

CRP coherence and identity

- The management structures are heavily weighted to preserve the role and prerogatives of the Centers. This may be rationalized as a necessary aspect of the transition from one set of funding relationships to the other but there is little evidence in the proposed structures that, as the CRPs develop, the Centers will recede in favor of programs with management coherence and a strong identity. It does the opposite – it puts in place a structure that allows continuous resistance of change. Centers are often fully represented in multiple settings—in steering committees, management committees, as observers on scientific advisory boards. A few notable exceptions stand out—CRP1.3 (Aquatic agricultural systems), CRP2 (policies, institutions and markets), and CRP3.7 (Meat, milk and fish)—accommodating meaningful independent perspectives through means that promise to be of significant value to the programs. Giving Centers equal and dominant roles in program management may appear to create transparency and reduce conflict among the participating Centers, but it is more likely to maintain the *status quo* and slow the full realization of the intended innovations central to the conception and intent of the CRPs.
- The “light” management units and the reliance on the existing capacity of the Centers to provide management services may streamline “backroom” functions like financial and contract management, HR and technology, but they starve the CRP of being able to marshal and manage the partnership strategy, engage in resource mobilization and create coherent communication programs. The risk is that the CRPs reinforce a “supply driven” nature of the research agenda. The last two areas are of particular importance in establishing a strong identity for a program. While the management units appear to have small budgets, the costs will still occur, just out of sight and under circumstances that are likely to be inefficient for the program but satisfying for the Centers. More intensive CRP management could deliver better integration between the components of the CRP, which currently appear parallel in some CRPs.
- The priority and value assigned to “light” management structures are also likely to handicap the integration of existing research activities into the coherent research objectives envisioned in the CRPs. The proposals frequently cite the perpetuation of silos or the inability to manage new partnerships effectively as risks. Nevertheless, with notable exceptions (CRP1.3 and CRP3.7), the management units have neither the capacity nor the mandate to manage these risks, as they are often staffed solely by a director with small administrative support. Achieving balance among participating Centers receives more attention in the formation of research management teams than skills in leading or managing change, and as noted below, CRP Directors are given no clear role in recruiting these managers, facilitating their development of new skills, or in evaluating their performance.

Balancing Partners and Centers

- Partners are given places on key management structures—steering and management committees—only in theory. More often, all of the Centers in a CRP are clearly represented in a decision-making setting, like a Steering Committee, but there is room

for partners at that level only if they demonstrate a financial or programmatic commitment judged to be commensurate with the Centers. Centers have long standing partnerships in place but very few are mentioned by name in the context of populating the management structures. Partners and stakeholders can be found included in advisory structures but these are not typically the settings where priority setting and resource allocation occur. Over the long run, as bi-lateral and restricted funding to Centers unwinds and declines, the crude equivalence between bringing money to the table and exerting influence on the program should diminish in favor of building structures that value and make use of knowledge, networks, and influence.

Increase confidence in decision making/assure accountability

- Of fifteen proposals, eleven lacked a structure that offers an independent and effective mechanism for program oversight, including evaluation, priority setting and resource allocation. The exceptions are noted in the review and are highlighted in Table 1. The CRPs prefer to keep everyone with a vested interest in an authoritative role within the management structure. While such an arrangement may reduce the potential for conflicts among Centers about priority setting or resource allocation, it does so at the expense of allowing other donors and partners to feel confident that decision making is driven by the best interests of the program.
- The periodic assignment of responsibility for commissioning evaluations is often left vague and may suffer when there is no reporting relationship to a lead Center's board (the instances where links with the governing body are in place are noted in Table 2). The examples of good oversight bodies stand out, giving outside perspectives a strong position in the structure and permission to be of value.
- CRP Directors do not get much scope or encouragement to build a research management team. Although there is every reason to fill research management positions with the scientists already at work in a similar or identical assignment within a Center, the CRP Directors are not given the tools to manage these ready-made staff for performance. The Director is not given a role in evaluating research team members or in recruiting new members as the program evolves or vacancies occur. Furthermore, research managers are also not given much room to succeed - with sometimes only 25 or 30 percent of their time budgeted for management responsibilities.

Streamline operations/increase budgetary transparency

- The value proposition for developing leadership and management of the CRPs is distorted. Several CRPs do not appreciate the need to budget explicitly for management. CRP3.1 (WHEAT) and CRP3.2 (MAIZE) made a case that the direct management costs be covered by the Fund Council and, in doing so, held those costs to a mere 2-4% of the budget with little to show for that investment. Emphasis is on percentages rather than the adequacy of management. Modest percentages can still yield significant resources for management. Nevertheless, neither proposal describes a management unit with any specificity given the estimated expense, nor staffing levels commensurate with the complexity of the program. In both cases, these CRPs chose to dispense with a Program Director completely (unless some current CIMMYT staff position will perform this function).
- Because common sense dictates that a range of management activities will continue to be provided by the Centers, the CRP budgets do not reflect the full cost of program management. Of greater concern over the long term is the inability to assess whether the programs are managed in a cost effective manner or if significant redundancies in

capacity exist. Because several Centers—CIMMYT, ICARDA, AfricaRice and IRRI, in particular—will align their entire research agendas within a relatively small number of CRPs, a review of their current management budgets provides an indirect path to estimating the full costs of program management for the first few years of the CRPs working at comparable scales.

- In the past years, a lot of attention has been placed on improving the effectiveness of CGIAR Center governance. The reduced volume of traditional governance tasks that will occur as a Center's research portfolio migrates to CRPs may argue for smaller boards and relying on the new formulations of program committees possible for the CRPs through more robust engagement of new perspectives and outside experts. This path may provide opportunities to improve effectiveness and reduce overall costs of management and governance within the new CGIAR.

Concluding remarks

Many of the Centers already have experience in managing large programs involving multiple partners. Some examples of good practice from this experience have been incorporated into some of the CRPs. The ISPC recognizes the challenges ahead in managing these multi-partners programs for delivery impact and would encourage the Consortium Board to facilitate further cross-CRP review of CRP governance, management arrangements and practices once the implementation phases are underway, to continue the sharing of best practice and in support of the CGIAR reform.

Table 1 – Principal Management and Advisory Structures

Table 1 highlights management bodies that function as settings for the DGs, their equivalents or deputies of the primary Centers and partners to gather. These bodies typically review priorities and resource allocations and play a role in conflict resolution. Also listed in Table 1 are advisory bodies with varying degrees of independence and authority, but with the potential to bring a measure of objectivity in combination with expertise and an “outsiders” perspective. A number of CRPs organized their management structures to create or enable independent oversight. These are highlighted.

CRP	Steering or equivalent Leadership and composition	Science/Partnership Advisory Composition
CRP1.1 Dry Area systems	Steering Committee ICARDA DG—chair 9+1 Centers/SSA CP Weighted representation, other partners/stakeholders, criteria not identified	Independent Scientific Advisors: 4 members Regional Stakeholder Advisory Committees
CRP1.2 Humid tropics	Steering Committee IITA DG—Chair 7+3 Centers/Primary Partners	R4D Advisory Committee: 8 members + IITA DG + 2 DG observers
CRP1.3 Aquatic agricultural systems	Program Oversight Panel (balanced oversight body, majority not Center affiliated) Chair is selected from independent POP members 8 members + WorldFish rep + a Center DG	
CRP2 Policies, institutions, and markets	Science and Advisory Panel (independent oversight body) Chair and members appointed by IFPRI board 9 members total	
CRP3.1 WHEAT	Management Committee Co-chairs-CIMMYT and ICARDA research directors Members: program leaders from CIMMYT and ICARDA, representatives of primary research partners	Oversight Committee: 6 regional members, CIMMYT and ICARDA DGs and chair of the Management Committee
CRP3.2 MAIZE	Management Committee CIMMYT Research Director, chair 10 or fewer members--Research Directors + regional and program leaders from primary research partners (projected to be 5 initially organizations)	Oversight Committee: No size given Experts from diverse partners + 1 representative each of primary research partners
CRP3.3 GRiSP	Program Planning and Management Team Members—DDG Research or equivalent of IRRI,	Oversight Committee: 9 members-4 external experts, 5 IRRI, AfricaRice, CIAT board members

CRP	Steering or equivalent Leadership and composition	Science/Partnership Advisory Composition
	AfricaRice and CIAT + 3 partners + Program Director	IRRI/AfricaRice DGs ex officio
CRP3.4 Roots, tubers and bananas	Steering Committee CIP DG, chair DGs of CIP, CIAT, Bioversity, ITTA Application/approval of additional members +Program Director, ex officio	Science Advisory Committee: 5-6 members Appointed by Steering Committee
CRP3.5 Grain legumes	Steering Committee ICRISAT DG, chair 12 members (approximately), DGs or equivalents of 4 participating Centers and principal partners with “selected representation” of other organizations	R4D Advisory Panel: A “pool” of 6-10 advisors used individually
CRP3.6 Dryland cereals	Steering Committee ICRISAT DG, chair 12 members, DG or equivalents of ICRISAT and ICARDA and major partners	R4D Advisory Panel: A “pool” of 6-10 advisors used individually
CRP3.7 Meat, milk and fish	Science and Partnership Advisory Committee Members—Internationally recognized scientists, development partners and private sector representatives to address science relevance, partnership strategy, exert influence	
CRP4 Nutrition and health	Planning and Management Committee Chaired by ILRI DG for two years, convened by Program Director 7 + chair 3 representing Centers/partners, 4 research theme leaders	Independent Advisory Committee: 6 members
CRP5 Water, land ecosystems	Steering Committee was merged with Science and Impact Advisory Council to create a more balanced management body. The revision was in response to the ISPC commentary on an earlier proposal, and included in the 24/09, 2011 proposal. Co-chaired by IWMI DG and independent member Proposed size not indicated. Original structures included 9 member Steering Committee and 6 member Advisory Council.	
CRP6 Forests, trees and agroforestry	CIFOR DG 4 Centers + 4 “outside” members (financial commitment to program a criteria for inclusion in SC	Scientific and Stakeholder Advisory Committee: No size indicated Chair to be elected from among SSAC members
CRP7 Climate change,	Independent Scientific Panel—responsibility for planning, evaluation, resource allocation	

CRP	Steering or equivalent Leadership and composition	Science/Partnership Advisory Composition
agriculture and food security	Chair + 9 members + 3 observers (CIAT board member + ESSP and Center rep)	

Table 2 -- Composition and structure of the advisory bodies

CRP	Title	Reports to	Links to Lead Center Board	Leadership	Structure
CRP1.1 Dry Area systems	Independent Scientific Advisors	Steering Committee	No	Not indicated	4 members No terms 30-45 days a year
CRP1.2 Humid tropics	R4D Advisory Committee	Steering Committee CRP Director	Annual report	Chair, nominated by committee	8 members 3 yrs x 2 Nominated by committee
CRP1.3 Aquatic agricultural systems	Program Oversight Panel	WorldFish Board	POP attends one WF Board mtg. DG or board member sits on POP	Chair, appointed by WF Board May not be a Center DG or a member of WF Board	8 members 3 yrs x 2 Chair has 2 yr term
CRP2 Policies, institutions, and markets	Science and Advisory Panel	IFPRI Board	Formal annual report Regular chair to chair communication	Chair appointed by IFPRI board	9 members 3 yrs
CRP3.1 WHEAT	Oversight Committee	CIMMYT	No	No chair	9 members 3 representing CIMMYT and ICARDA + 6 representing regions No terms
CRP3.2 MAIZE	Oversight Committee	CIMMYT	No	No chair	No size given Experts from diverse partners + 1 representative each of primary research partners
CRP3.3	Oversight	IRRI, AfricaRice,	Annually to each board	Chair elected from	9 members,

CRP	Title	Reports to	Links to Lead Center Board	Leadership	Structure
GRiSP	Committee	CIAT boards		among external experts on OC	2 each from IRRI and AfricaRice boards, 1 from CIAT board, 4 external experts IRRI and AfricaRice DGs are ex officio
CRP3.4 Roots, tubers and bananas	Scientific Advisory Committee	CIP Board Management Committee	Annual report to full CIP Board	Chair (no clear appointing authority)	5-6 science and development experts No terms
CRP3.5 Grain legumes	Scientific Advisory Panel	Research Management Team	No	No	6-10 experts called upon individually for advice 1-3 yr. appointments
CRP3.6 Dryland cereals	Scientific Advisory Panel	Research Management Team	No	No	6-10 experts called upon individually for advice 1-3 yr. appointments
CRP3.7 Meat, milk and fish	Science and Partnership Advisory Committee	Program Planning and Management Committee ILRI DG and Board	Annual report to ILRI Board Report/advise to ILRI DG	No	Size not indicated Program Director to lead formation No terms
CRP4 Nutrition and health	Independent Advisory Committee	Planning and Management Committee	No	Not indicated	6 members 3 scientists + 2 partners + member of Harvest Plus Advisory Board Nominations submitted to IFPRI DG by PMC
CRP5 Water, land ecosystems	Steering Committee	IWMI Board		Co-chairs	Size not specified. No terms for partner or independent members.
CRP6 Forests, trees and agroforestry	Scientific and Stakeholder Advisory Committee	Steering Committee	No	Chair	Size not specified No terms
CRP7 Climate	Independent Scientific	CIAT Board	Chair reports annually to CIAT board	Chair	9 + 3 observers 3 yrs x 2

CRP	Title	Reports to	Links to Lead Center Board	Leadership	Structure
change, agriculture and food security	Panel		CIAT board member is observer on ISP		

Table 3 – Program Leadership and Management

All but two of the CRPs included a program leader of some kind. The levels of authority varied, with some directors expected to provide intellectual as well as programmatic leadership, and to serve as the spokesperson or visible representative of the program. Most of the program directors chair the CRP’s program management committee, although it is rare to see a program director given a role in selecting or shaping the quality of research management. As the table indicates, the budget allocated to CRP management is not predictive of the size or scope of the program management unit—some CRPs propose program management units that address CRP-level communications, partnership strategy, or resource mobilization for the same investment as a CRP with no apparent staff or function other than a program director and basic administrative support.

CRP	Leadership (title, duties)	Size of unit	Communications (in unit budget)	Resource Mobilization (in unit budget)	Budget ^a (USD million)
CRP1.1 Dry Area systems	Leader DG-equivalent “world leading scientist” remain active in research (10%)		No	No Partner/donor relations	No direct costs included
CRP1.2 Humid tropics	Director Coordinate/report Chair, Program Management Team	Director + administrative	No/IITA	No	\$2.5 over 3 yrs. (2% of program costs)
CRP1.3 Aquatic agricultural systems	Leader Overall manager Chairs Program Leadership Team Reports to POP Joint performance evaluation	Leader + 3-5		Yes	\$3 over 3 yrs (5%)
CRP2 Policies, institutions, and markets	Director Overall manager Chairs Program Management Team	Director + 2	Not clear	Not clear	No direct costs included Program Management Team to recommend management budget

CRP	Leadership (title, duties)	Size of unit	Communications (in unit budget)	Resource Mobilization (in unit budget)	Budget ^a (USD million)
CRP3.1 WHEAT	No CRP director Program management within CIMMYT office of research and partnerships	Technology staff	CIMMYT	Not clear	\$4.5 over 3 yrs. (4%) \$2.05 of total to global leadership and meetings.
CRP3.2 MAIZE	No CRP director Program management within CIMMYT research director	Technology staff	CIMMYT	Not clear	\$6.5 over 3 yrs. (4%) \$1.65 of total to global leadership and meetings.
CRP3.3 GRiSP	Director Coordinator Lead member of Program Planning and Management Team	Director + 2	IRRI	Not clear	\$12.8 for 5 yrs. (3%) Program coord. expenses + communications (Capacity building, M&E, Gender budgeted separately)
CRP3.4 Roots, tubers and bananas	Director Overall manager Chairs Management Committee	Director + 3	Yes	Not clear	\$8.7 for 3 yrs. (5%)
CRP3.5 Grain legumes	Director Limited scope of management Chair, Research Management Team	None described	No	No	\$2.4 over 3 yrs. (2%)
CRP3.6 Dryland cereals	Director Limited scope of management Chair, Research Management Team	None described	No	No	\$2.02 over 3 yrs. (3%)
CRP3.7 Meat, milk and fish	Director Overall manager Chair, Program Planning and Management Committee	Director + 3	Yes	Yes	\$5.6 over 3 yrs. (6%) Includes staff/expenses for communications, and partner/resource development
CRP4 Nutrition and health	Director Overall manager Convenes but does not chair Program Management Committee	Director + 4	No	Yes	\$4 over 3 yrs (2%)
CRP5 Water,	Director	Director + 6	No	Yes	\$13.3 over 3 yrs. (6%)

CRP	Leadership (title, duties)	Size of unit	Communications (in unit budget)	Resource Mobilization (in unit budget)	Budget ^a (USD million)
land ecosystems	Overall manager Chairs Management Committee				
CRP6 Forests, trees and agroforestry	Head Overall manager	Not indicated	3 person unit but location in org. structure not indicated	Yes	\$2.9 over 3 yrs. for coordination (1%) \$2.4 for communication
CRP7 Climate change, agriculture and food security	Lead Overall manager Chairs Program Management Committee	Lead + 5	Yes	Yes	\$4.6 over 3 yrs. (10%)

^a CRP budget information included a varying degree of specificity.